

EDITORIALS.

Contra Pundit

Seldom does an Op-Ed piece in any newspaper make a noise louder than the sound of one type-writer letting off steam. But Edgar Chamorro's effort in the June 24 *New York Times* was a bomb-shell. The former Nicaraguan *contra* not only repudiated U.S. policy and exposed C.I.A. deceptions, he may have blown himself out of this country, which has given him aid and comfort since 1979.

Chamorro is a member of that ubiquitous Nicaraguan family that includes a dizzying array of Sandinistas, centrists and *contras*. Three years ago, he says, the C.I.A. recruited him to be the front man in the United States for the Nicaraguan Democratic Force, the army led by dictator Somoza's former National Guardsmen (this from Chamorro), which is waging a campaign of terror and murder from Honduran sanctuaries (again from Chamorro). But Chamorro broke with the F.D.N. last year, and he told a lot—if not all—in his brief article. That was his mistake.

An Immigration and Naturalization Service official in Miami, Perry Rivkind, spotted the Chamorro confession and opened up the former *contra*'s file. There Rivkind discovered that Chamorro was "an illegal," just like the undocumented legions of car-wash jockeys, burger slingers and domestics in his bailiwick, who run the risk of deportation every day. For some reason, Chamorro's case seemed more urgent than the others, and Rivkind moved against him. Politics, Rivkind insisted, had nothing to do with the decision to pursue Chamorro's deportation.

"That would be a violation of the law," he correctly told a reporter. Bureaucratic backlog and official error were blamed for the delay in deporting Chamorro after his petition for asylum was denied last December—following his break with the U.S. war effort.

Chamorro is hardly a hero on anybody's list these days, but he does merit a silver star for ratting on the C.I.A. and disclosing some of its dirty tricks. For instance, he told how the agency wrote the F.D.N.'s communiqués ("in perfect Spanish"), how agents lied about the origin of the mines in Nicaragua's harbors last year and how the United States sanctions torture and intimidation of civilians by the renegade Guardsmen. He should get some small reward for that testimony, but the only present this government is likely to offer him is a one-way ticket to the country against which he took up arms.